

Does a religious context alter the way in which we “react” to faces? An IRAP analysis.

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INTRODUCTION & AIM OF STUDIES

Prejudice, as a verbal behavioral pattern, is the result of processes of derivation and transformation of stimulus function. Three studies aimed to empirically investigate implicit relational responses to faces showing anger and fear and neutral expressions in the context of the Catholic and Islamic symbols using the Implicit Relational Association Procedure (IRAP). Our hypothesis was that the presence of religious symbols could alter the implicit labeling of emotions and that in a Catholic Italian context Christian religion is associated with joy, while the Islamic religion is associated with anger and fear. In summary, in our university sample results showed a positive picture in which no negative bias with regard to the Catholic and Islamic religions is observed. Despite the fact that in the Italian mass-media context Islam has lately been associated with violence.

INSTRUMENTS

- VLQ – Valued Living Questionnaire
- AAQ II - Acceptance and Action Questionnaire II
- CFQ - Cognitive Fusion Questionnaire
- SEE - Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy
- SDO - Social Dominance Orientation
- RWA - Right Wing Authoritarianism
- IRAP - Implicit Relational Assessment Procedure (Figure 1).

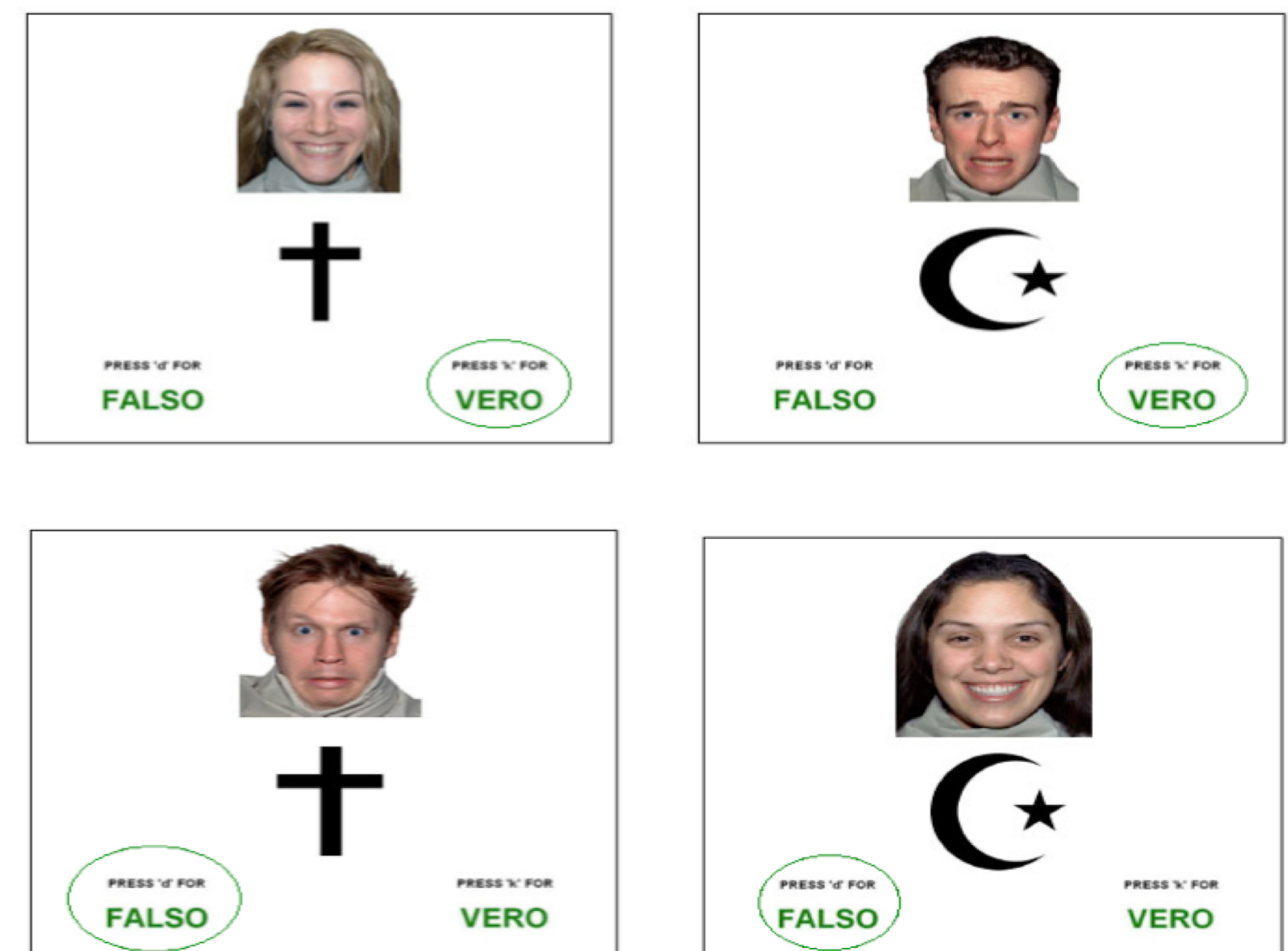


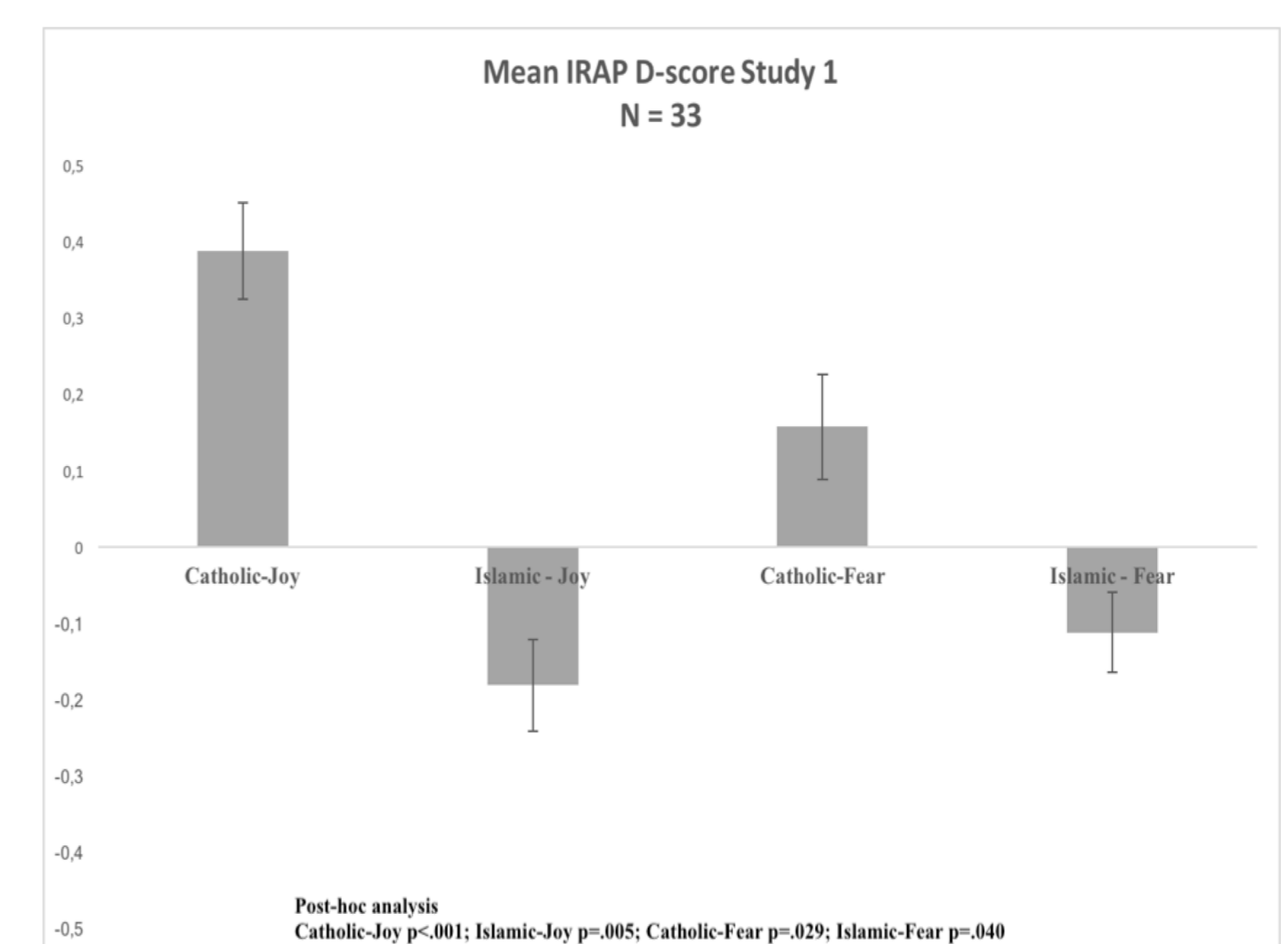
Figure 1. An examples of the four IRAP trial-type of the first study.

RESULTS

1st STUDY

Relationship between joy and fear and religious symbols

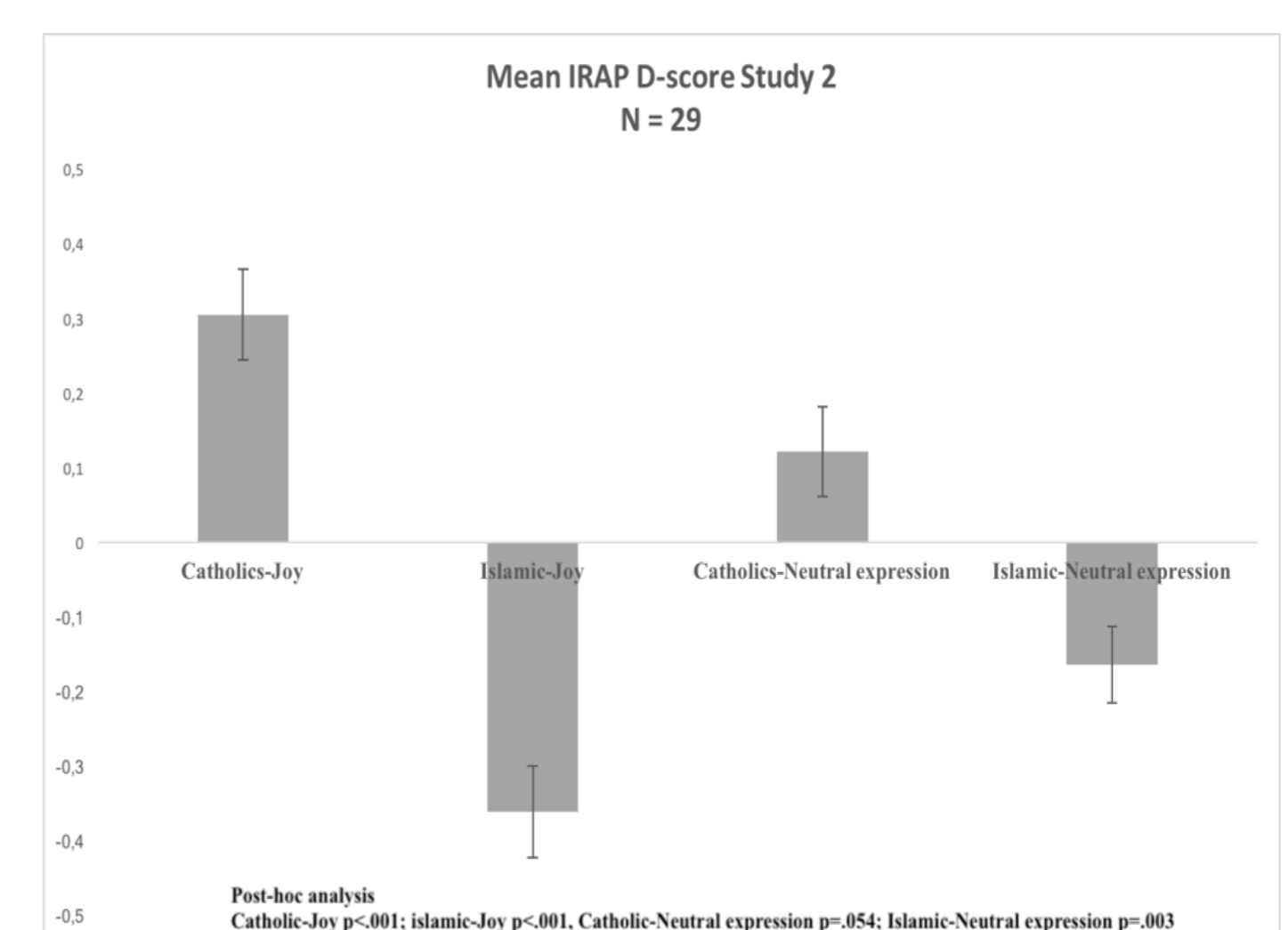
In the first study, we investigated the relationships between religious symbols and facial expressions of joy and fear to test the hypothesis that the facial expression depicting joy was more quickly associated with the symbol of the Catholic cross and the facial expression depicting fear was more quickly associated with the symbol of Islam. Participants were significantly faster to respond to the relation between joy to Catholics symbol than to the Islamic ones.



2nd STUDY

Relationship between joy - neutral expression e religious symbols

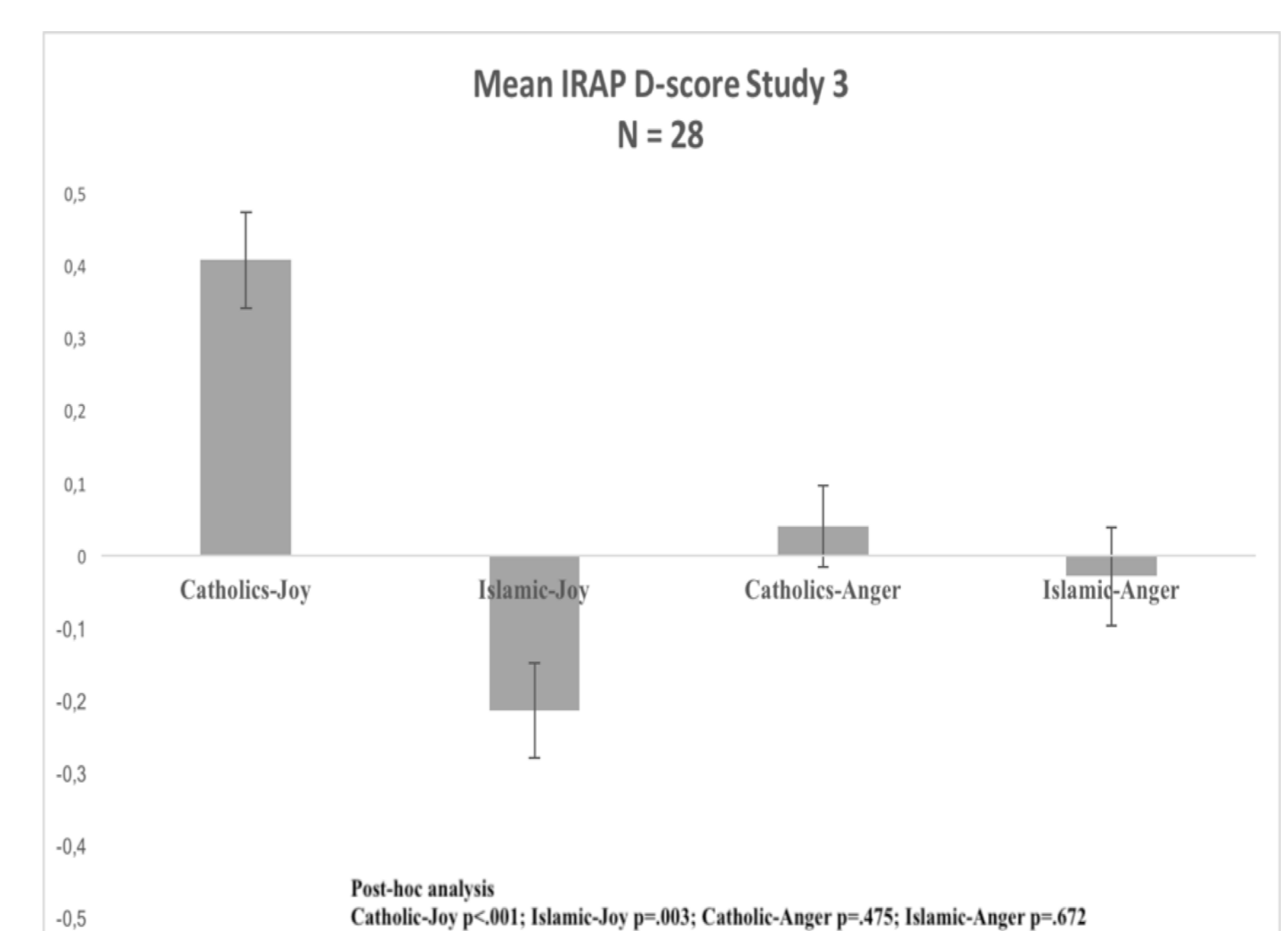
In the second study we investigated the relationships between religious symbols, joy and anger to test the hypothesis that the facial expression depicting joy was more quickly associated with the symbol of the Catholic cross and the facial expression depicting anger was more quickly associated with the symbol of Islam. Participants were significantly faster to associate Catholics symbol with joy than neutral expression, but they were also significantly slower to associate Islamic symbol with joy than neutral expression.



3rd STUDY

Relationship between joy and anger and religious symbols

In the third study we investigated the relationships between religious symbols, the expression of joy and a neutral expression to test the experimental model. In all three study different patterns of relational responding between religious stimuli and emotional expression emerged in the IRAP task. Participants were faster to associate joy in the presence of Catholics symbol than in presence of Islamic's one, but results didn't show significantly differences in the association of anger and religious symbols.



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